



Richmond Public Schools

Angela C. Wilson
Clerk of the School Board
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VIA Electronic Mail

July 23, 2019

Mr. Tom Nash
MuckRock News
DEPT MR 69925
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Dear Mr. Nash:

RE: Freedom of Information Act Request

Richmond Public Schools is in receipt of your Freedom of Information Act request that was made via electronic mail on July 17, 2019. Your request consisted of the following:

- All comments submitted by email, response forms, phone, or other method regarding "Option 2" of the proposed RPS rezoning between May 1, 2019 and the time this request is processed.

Please see below.

You contact me at (804) 780-7716 with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Angela C. Wilson

c: Mrs. Dawn Page, School Board Chair
Mr. Jason Kamras, Superintendent
Mr. Darin Simmons, Jr. Chief Operating Officer
Attorney
File

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School Affiliation	Feedback Related to the Process and/or DRAFT Options
all Fox Fox Elementary	<p>I was not able to access the rezoning report</p> <p>Love option 2 and appreciate the increased diversity Fox will have. I do find it to be inequitable that Mumford does not have any improvements planned in the draft, as they could benefit from a more diverse learning environment as well.</p> <p>I don't see any changes between this rezoning map and the current school zone map. They appear to be identical. Where are the zoning changes?</p>
Franklin Military Academy	<p>I currently am confused as to the reason we are having another rezoning committee when we just recently had one with several recommendations.</p>
Holton	<p>I will only support Option 2 for Holton. It seems odd that Obama and Overby Sheppard are not changing in either Option. Option 1 makes Holton more white than it is now. Option 2 maintains the level of diversity that Holton currently enjoys.</p>
JB Fisher	<p>I didn't know about the meeting today, but am very concerned about the negative effects when kids don't go to their neighborhood schools</p>
John B Cary Linwood Holton Elementary	<p>Option 2 is vastly superior to 1. It has a clearly ordered structure that does not separate children between schools.</p> <p>I would like to see more publicity for meetings! Also, it is important that we acknowledge the difference between school zones & how we can redistribute resources among the schools. I.e. Every school should be a specialty school with opportunities and programs that serve the zone. It is disheartening to see that schools with less affluent parents end up with less opportunities (for example Minds In Motion which is paid for by the PTA at Holton, but Ginter Park Elem does not have a PTA therefore students cannot participate). The social capital and additional funds available at specific schools make the education and experience a very different experience. Privileged parents know to sign up for the lottery for specific schools and use the system to our advantage. I struggle with the options and in many ways, I wish that students would be required to attend their zoned school. By lottery and application programs, we continue to discriminate and segregate the schools. We will never do enough for our low income neighborhoods to help families and students succeed if we continue to cater to privilege.</p>
Oak Grove Swansboro	<p>Haven't seen recommendations</p> <p>I am unhappy with the decision not to redraw the lines of swansboro/closure. The facility is very poor and my children suffer as a result of the negligence in upkeep and staff retention due to the rumors of closure for close to a decade. I want my children to be zoned for a school where the rest of our community is = westover. We are one block into the swansboro district on west 34th and the line seems there arbitrarily.</p>

William Fox	<p>It is my sincere hope that this process will consider the best interests of current /future students and families in a more proactive way than just redrawing lines once again. We purchased a home and chose to invest in the City of Richmond with the knowledge of our daughters' zone school being William Fox. The flight of families and resources to the suburbs should be a foremost concern of this committee. As a licensed professional counselor, I also strongly urge this committee to consider the impact of school change on the lives of young people, many of whom have already had numerous traumatic experiences in their short lives. If lines are redrawn for future students, I sincerely hope that students and families who have already begun their relationships with schools are allowed to stay, thus providing consistency. I hope that this committee considers "out of the box" solutions such as K-2/3-5 schools.</p>
Elkhardt Thompson Middle School	<p>I am very concerned about keeping the Thompson building open after the new school on Hull Street opens. The building conditions continue to worsen and I believe renovation & maintenance work have been put on hold because the impression was that we were all moving to the new school. Continuing to have children and staff in the Thompson building is a SERIOUS health and safety concern. Additionally, how will staffing be decided if both buildings are open? I thought that all of the current ETMS staff would move to Hull Street. Who will want to stay in such a dilapidated building?</p>
William Fox	<p>I am disappointed that the rezoning options do not do much to increase diversity and integration. Option 1 is projected to increase the white populations at both Holton and Fox, and to keep Munford at its current level. Both Elementary Option 1 and Option 2 have large numbers of schools projected to remain at over capacity (5 and 7 projected to be at over 100% capacity, versus the 8 over 100% capacity now). For example, both Reid and Miles Jones are well over capacity, and neither option has their boundaries or numbers shift at all.</p> <p>As for the proposed Fox/Cary pairing, which would directly impact my children, I am in favor of integrating these two schools to increase diversity. However, I am concerned about putting Cary at over 100% capacity with this plan. I think the public wants to know if there will be new schools built to solve these problems, as it's hard to get public buy-in for uprooting our students when many of our problems won't be solved.</p>
Holton	<p>Under the draft options, my son will be rezoned for Ginter Park. I understand why that makes sense but he will miss being with his friends at Holton. I hope you consider an option for families currently attending Holton to remain there (if they choose) until they have graduated 5th grade. Not everyone will do it, and we might not, but it's important for us to have the option. Thanks for your consideration.</p>
William fox	<p>I'm not in support of combining fox and cary.</p>
Linwood Holton	<p>The link takes me to a password protected page. Is there a password the public can use to view the documents?</p>

Fox	<p>We bought a house in the Fan 2 blocks from Fox intending for our children to go there. If option 2 would be chosen, our family would be drastically affected and we would either move out of the city or have to send our child to private school. Starting a child in a school and then moving them to another school that is much further away is unacceptable. We urge you to think about what this does to our neighborhood and the kids in it. Our home value would go down drastically. What young family would choose to buy a house in a zone where children need to move schools DURING elementary school? We sure would not have. Developmentally, this is a delicate time for children and they need the stability of their friends and resources they have come to be comfortable with.</p>
Fox Elementary	<p>As the mother of a 4 year old who will be entering Kindergarten during the 2020-2021 school year, I am strongly opposed to DRAFT #2 rezoning option which will combine Fox Elementary and Cary Elementary. We bought our house in the Fan, directly across the street from Fox, with the intentions of sending our kids to that elementary school. We have donated to the school, volunteered at events, and befriended many people in our neighborhood because of the community Fox has created. My youngest daughter would enter Kindergarten the same year that her older sister would be bussed over to Cary Elementary. Our girls would never go to elementary school together and I would have two children at two different elementary schools. If option 2 is passed I know that I, along with many other neighbors, would carefully weigh the decision of whether to send my children to private school or to move out of the district for a better elementary school option for our family.</p>
Fox	<p>I am opposed to the rezoning proposals that have come up for review. I believe that there are better ways to address the lack of education that our schools currently provide. I do not believe that the proposed rezoning drafts will improve the learning environments for our children. Improving facilities, increasing staff, developing greater community involvement, and more thoughtful spending seem like better avenues to pursue for our student's futures. Allowing our children to go to school in their home neighborhoods and develop relationships with those who live around them seems like a more natural course of action. I believe that focusing on improving the spaces, experiences and after school activities in the schools and communities seems more beneficial then sending our children to multiple facilities for the sake of trying something new. Offering our students consistency and caring should be a greater part of the mission. Shifting children around the city for our short sighted agendas will not change the homes and communities they go to after they leave our schools. I am a Richmond Public School alumni and I attended Cary, Fox, Binford, TJ and Open. Should draft option 2 be executed, I will not be sending my children to the school that they can see from their bedroom windows. I must admit, that as a Richmond native, I am not surprised by these proposals.</p>
Cary Linwood Holton Elementary School	<p>Interesting that Munford has no changes. Does that have anything to do with money and power or am I being paranoid?</p> <p>I am concerned that with rezoning options 1 and 2 Linwood Elementary School becomes even whiter. We moved to the area from the suburbs so our child could grow up in a diverse and inclusive school.</p> <p>Because we live in an area/street (zoned in Holton now) that is more diverse, than say, Seminary we along with children of color will be moved to a school that is mostly children of color.</p> <p>This seems to do the opposite of what we should be striving for. What is your plan to address this?</p>

William Fox

Fox has over 100 out of zone kids. If we had these kids attend their zoned school, we may not have to split up the fan. Also, I feel like the line should be moved to Harrison, not Allen.

Fox

Please have community meetings on this ASAP! The Fox Community is talking amongst itself and has ALOT of questions, ALOT of concerns. Support varies in this community, but I think the best thing to do, is to open the lines of communication and schedule some community meetings as quickly as possible. I like where this is going, and as previously stated, I support option 2, but want to give people a chance to have in person conversations instead of being forced to pull statistics individually and have conversations like this via social media. I'm the outgoing PTA president and would be happy to help organize something at Fox. Please reach out to me anishawalker82@gmail.com.

Armstrong High School

I'm disappointed that these proposals are very safe. I know we have an overcrowding issue but we also have a huge segregation issue! The only part of either proposal that I've seen address that is pairing Fox and Carter. I fully support this but it doesn't go far enough because it is limited to only 2 schools. Pairing Fairfield and Woodville won't make a difference in demographics because they both pull primarily from our public housing communities, and absolutely nothing seems to be being done about the middle and high schools. This is an issue of equity and if we don't address it now then it's not going to happen for another 10 years at least. The research on school segregation is clear - it helps no one and hurts minorities, while integration helps everyone! <https://tcf.org/content/facts/the-benefits-of-socioeconomically-and- racially-integrated-schools-and-classrooms/?agreed=1>

This administration has already shown its willingness to disrupt the status quo in RPS and has paid a lot of lip-service to social justice. Now is not the time to back down!

Mary Munford

Fox Elementary

Zoning I can not see with the made provided

I urge you to please choose "Option 1" for a variety of reasons that would greatly affect my family. We purchased our home years ago specifically to be in the Fox school district. We have paid high property taxes because of this decision but we are committed to doing so to be able to attend Fox. We can walk to Fox and do not want our kids to be bused to a school outside of our neighborhood. This is also not an environmentally friendly option (busing)...most Fox kids walk to school and this is extremely environmentally friendly. Also, our 2 kids would have to go to two separate elementary schools for several years. This adds stress to the school year. PLEASE do not make this drastic change (option 2). PLEASE choose option 1!!! Thank you for allowing us to provide feedback.

Fox

Hi, I read an option 2 regarding join Cary and Fox to split the k-2 and 3-5 grades. I bought a house 3 blocks from Fox solely for the reason of having a neighborhood school and being able to walk my daughter to school. Also, I researched academic scores of RPS and chose to move to the fan based on the academic performance of Fox. This change will have a major impact and creates a ton of uncertainty. I am strongly opposed to the split. We start kindergarten in the fall and this change is concerning. I want my daughter to have consistency in school and have doubts attending RPS with the uncertainty about how this will impact her education.

Holton

1. Will the committee discuss/recommend some of the governing principles surrounding implementation of the new zones? Things like how far out from School Board approval to set an effective date and how to deal with younger siblings who are zoned "away" from their older siblings. 2. Are school closures part of this conversation as well?

Fox Elementary/ Binford Middle

I'm concerned with elementary option 2

I live on odd side of 100 block of North Allen.

Is elem Option 2 designed such that opposite sides of Allen are two different zones? <safety> Mixing elementary walkers and busses on same narrow avenue- already gridlocked with full residential parking (many homeowners work from home and cars remain all day) and Binford families dropping off and parking/ waiting at pick up time - (often too close to intersections creating difficulties with blocking traffic circles and sidewalk access) additionally traffic calming circle at Allen and Floyd is already a challenge for busses and morning traffic - I have - in two years- had three side mirrors hit (torn off) by cars in morning / afternoon rush on this block-

North Allen cannot accommodate two way traffic with parked cars if one vehicle is a bus- it requires that one vehicle backs up... and that is a nightmare if there are cars behind them. This same situation holds true (but not quite as bad) on Vine... traffic circle/ parked cars/ narrow two way street.. wouldn't Lombardy be better?

<social> I think young children on small city streets benefit from attending the same school as their neighbors across street if residential. Creating a village is hard enough in today's world and in the recent year N Allen has made great advances..

Again, wouldn't Lombardy be a better - less controversial- choice - it has traffic lights and very limited residential

“frontage” and already is a certain type of border.

Respectfully submitted

Elizabeth Boastfield

Fox, Binford

It seems there should be a “walker” zone around every school. If you can see a school from your home it should be your home school.

Fox, Binford, TJ

According to the goals and objectives of the rezoning process, "ensuring safe, equitable, and more timely transportation; and leveraging natural boundaries when possible" is important. Option 2 for the 2nd district is in opposition to this goal. I recently purchased a home with the idea that my children would get to attend the neighborhood school that is walkable. I never believed that a school that is .5 miles from my home could not be my children's school. We live in the Fan and both Fox and Binford are located in the Fan. In option 2, my children will be taken out of the neighborhood school and will have to cross two very busy streets making it unwalkable. They will also have a longer transportation time to and from school. Having to tell my children that they cannot attend the school that their friends in the neighborhood attend, who literally live across the street from us, is heartbreaking as a parent. Please do not consider option 2 for the 2nd district, as it does not meet one of the goals of rezoning schools. Children who live together in a neighborhood should be allowed to attend the neighborhood school together.

Fox

I believe that zoning the Fan out of Fox and TJ is going to only hurt these schools in the long run and not help the schools you are intending. I will not send my child for his 4th and 5th grade year to a school that is consistently underperforming and then cheating on SOL tests. You will lose our family's RPS support in addition to many others. IF you want rezoning to be a better process, work on providing excellence to all children at all schools. The lack of performance at schools should not be blamed on the students or families attending. Lack of high standards for principals and teachers, worksheet teaching, and unwillingness to fire teachers who are not top notch is RPS's biggest problem. The acceptance of low standards has driven great teachers from these low performing schools. I am not interested in sacrificing my kid's education to spread better SOL scores around to schools who have not earned them. We have seen the difference in our local middle school when a highly qualified and committed principal came in, set high standards, turned over 75% of the teachers because they were not interested in truly teaching, and began gaining the support of the community. She received this support because her commitment to excellence was backed up by her actions. You cannot reverse engineer this. If you want more kids at Carver, etc. - hire the principal that will get you there and let her find her teachers and support staff. The neighborhood will come if you do. If you try to force kids from a high performing school to a low performing school with no accreditation and history of cheating, you will still end up with a bunch of empty seats, little community support, and less support for your school system overall. Marshall will suffer in the same way.

Linwood Holton Elementary

Hello, thank you for working hard to make RPS great for all children. I am a parent of an incoming kindergardener who will attend Linwood Holton in 2019-2020 and according to rezoning plan, will move to Ginter Park Elementary in 2020-2021 pending approval. First of all, I want to say that I think it makes a lot of sense for my kid to go to Ginter Park Elementary. We live just a few blocks down the street! I am excited about the prospect of rezoning helping to make that school flourish. However, I worry that this plan does little to address real challenges currently facing the school. Namely, the fact that the 100 year old facility is absolutely crumbling. I see incredible inequity between Holton and Ginter Park that seems to map on the fact that GPE predominately serves low-income Black students. Holton has an organic butterfly garden and solar panels while Ginter Park elementary has zero shade and looks like it's about to fall down, even though it is a gorgeous, historic building. This is not ok. How is the rezoning plan going to impact these larger issues around racial and income inequity in our school system? I see a numbers game being played -- moving bodies from already succeeding schools making things even better for the already well-served students there who remain. Yes, this plan helps HOLston's overcrowding, but how does it bring some of the success of schools like Holton (and Fox) to other area elementary schools? When 20 children from my neighborhood are shifted from Holton to GPE I dare say at least half will simply put their kids in private schools. I intend to stay but how are we going to take steps forward to make all of our schools flourish? I think reworking the map to include more income and racial diversity in all of the schools would be a more bold solution to the numbers problem. Can this be accomplished with the current re-zoning plan? I think the Fox-Cary merger is a bold idea that might work well in our Northside region as well. There are associated inconveniences, but I'll take inconvenience for equity. All of current Holton/GPE students could be in one group and the two schools could serve different grade levels, i.e. GPE kindergarden-2nd grade and HOLston 2-5. In sum: I'm all for working to make GPE a flourishing school and being part of that. This plan doesn't seem to do that, though. It's all about a body-problem, not the broader educational equity problem. I mean, is overcrowding at a handful of schools the biggest challenge facing our school system? I wish it was.

Fox Elementary

To members of the Richmond Public Schools Rezoning Committee,

As a parent of two rising Fox Elementary students, I'd like to express my appreciation to the committee for addressing this important step toward the future of RPS schools. However, I must also share my concern for the negative impacts I predict, should the Option 2 pairing of schools take place.

My wife and I are both products of strong public school educations, myself from Chesterfield County schools, and she from the Wayland Public School system outside Boston, MA. When we moved to Richmond in 2016, we chose the Fan District for its diversity, walkability, and because of the reputation of Fox Elementary. It's academic record, it's commitment to diversity within an urban neighborhood school context, and strong dedication shown by the Fox Elementary PTO, all made this the ideal school environment in which to raise our young children.

The Option 2 school pairing would diminish Fox Elementary into a half- school of sorts. It would take away the opportunity for children to grow academically and emotionally in one setting within the K-5 model.

Additionally, it would weaken the valuable social and cultural impact that the PTO contributes to the area on a daily basis. Our children, aged three school years apart, would never attend the same elementary school in this system. School transport challenges aside, this would be a negative consequence to many families currently attending Fox and John B Cary Schools. Regarding the goal of increased diversity within Fox and John B Cary Schools, I believe that the Cropper GIS consultants make one major mistake in their attendance projections. I believe the assumption that 100% of current students at Fox will participate in a school pairing scenario is highly unlikely. I think many Fox parents, my wife and I included, would explore the multitude of nearby school options that exist within parochial, private, and Chesterfield/Henrico Public school systems rather than choose a paired school option.

Statistically, it is likely that the pairing won't actually make the schools more diverse, just differently diverse. If the combination of the schools (100% participating) changes the projected racial breakdown from Fox (66% Caucasian/34% Minority) and Cary (10% Caucasian/90% Minority), to a paired breakdown of (46% Caucasian/54% Minority), then with *66% of current Fox students participating (*personal estimate, but more likely than 100% participation assumed by Cropper GIS), the paired breakdown would likely look more like (33% Caucasian/67% Minority). This result is not any more diverse than Fox's current breakdown, but differently diverse. It's still the same unbalanced ratio, only with inverted racial inputs.

On a related note, if racial diversity is a true overarching goal of RPS Rezoning, the glaring omission of Mary Munford Elementary in these discussions, the least diverse school in the city (Caucasian/Minority ratio), needs to be addressed.

In closing, I would like to share a possible solution for consideration. Like many Fox parents and future Fox parents, I love the school for being a strong, diverse, public K-5 elementary school, and for the anchor that it is to the neighborhood and community. I would invite the Rezoning committee to consider funding a building addition to Fox Elementary School. Added space would enable the school to accommodate additional minority students from outside RPS school zones, and could bring the Fox Elementary breakdown as close to a truly

Fox Elementary 1911 building hasn't changed much in over a century, and an updated addition would mirror the progress and evolution being made throughout our city, blending the old with the new. There is even a location ready for building, currently where two outdoor trailer classrooms sit. In that place there could be a permanent 3-story addition that could allow additional, and more diverse students to learn and thrive at Fox Elementary for generations to come. This investment into, as opposed to away from, one of RPS's true academic and community assets, would go a long way to show the public that the future of RPS schools is indeed bright. RPS could point proudly to a school environment where diversity, high academic performance and strong neighborhood/community relations all thrive together. Fox Elementary could be that success story, and I hope one of many public school highlights we hear about within the city of Richmond in the coming years. RPS has the potential to be a leader in public education, not only among city school districts, but among all districts. Sincerely, Nathan Bick

Armstrong

Cary

Cary elementary

The documents link goes to a login page

We do not like them.

Option 2 makes the most sense in terms of diversity and capacity optimization between Cary/fox

William Fox

I am NOT in favor of re-zoning William Fox elementary school. Please allow my children to attend the SAME school from k-5. It is a great neighborhood school and please don't deny children the right to attend their neighborhood school during their elementary years. Thank you.

Fox, Binford, Thomas Jefferson

I am a long term resident of Richmond and live in the FAN area and have supported Richmond Public Schools. I dismayed at the proposed zoning changes to the Fan District. According to Public School View, "Fox School Demographics" have remained "flat over 5 years." A clerical error at RPS sent notices that 30 families were accepted for open enrollment after Jason Kamras became superintendent. He approved these positions causing a trailer to be built for increased population. Did the recent study note that? Are out of school zoned children counted as taking a school slot because they are now attending Fox School? Did the study look at the fact that west of Boulevard was zoned for Fox after being in the closer located Cary School zone and many of those students presently attend Fox? Why are the scheduled meetings of these proposals being announced during summer vacation? It seems there is a lack of transparency.

Fox is a neighborhood school in the Fan and improved because of parental involvement. Thirty years ago Fox was not the school it is today, it is shining example of what a school can be. Why change demographics and disrupt neighborhood schools? The school Board and school administration should look at Fox as an example and emulate it not dismantle it. Please do not place an undo burden on young families, it is unfair to the young parents who chose to purchase houses in a specific location in the city to be told that they no longer can attend two of their neighborhood schools.